

Design Resource

Seashell Craft - Puri, Orissa

Decorative Items

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Divyadarshan C. S. and
Ranjitha M. C.

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/seashell-craft-puri-orissa>

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Introduction

Seashell is an exoskeleton of marine mollusks such as snails, clams, oysters, etc., which is a hard outer protective layer. These seashells are formed in layers and are composed of calcium carbonate with a less quantity of protein (not more than 2%). Seashells are normally found in beach drift, which is natural waste matter left along strand-lines on beaches by the waves and the tides. Some of these seashells such as oyster shells are used as soil conditioner in horticulture. Shells of *Turbinella pyrum* (the holy shanka) are reflected to be sacred to the god Vishnu.

In olden days seashells like cowry shells and tusk shells were using as a currency in Arab and North Western North America for many centuries because of the durability and easy to carry. Cowries were habitually treated as genuine fertility charms. In some of the south Indian states these cowries are used to make astrological predictions. The moche civilization of ancient Peru worshipped the sea and depicted shells in their traditional art. Shells are available in a wide range of colours, shades, tones and textures.

Seashells were used by humans for many different reasons from pre-historic period. The shells of large sea snail (*cypraecassis rufa*) were historically and still it is used to make precious cameos. Seashells play an important role Hindu tradition, whereas the bangles made of conch shells are the traditional bangles worn by married Bengali women. Seashell art and crafts are unique form, which is done by using natural treasures found on the seashore. This unique art form helps to translate innovative ideas in to product creation to a new height. In India the seashell craft is traced from the period of Portuguese in Goa and other coastal areas where doors and architectures are decorated with seashells. Seashells are also used to make ornaments, musical instruments and crafts such as chandeliers, table lampshades, flowerpots, door wreath decoration and mirror with seashell frame. The seashell mirror frame is a very special craft, which beautify the normal mirror to excellent one.

Mrs.Sashmitha Das from Puri, a well-known craftswoman who is trained by a senior craftsman Mr. Japher when she was in her high school that is on 1993. Later on she continued this seashell art by helping her husband who is also a craftsman. The group of artisans who were trained by senior craftswoman will finish 30 to 35 big mirrors in one day.

Mr. Devprasadh Das who lives in Puri, Orissa is a renowned craftsman who has 20 years of experience in seashell craft. Before this seashell craft was done in Tamilnaadu and then they were selling them in Puri but later on he started doing seashell craft by giving training to some of the localites. He use to sell seashell craft in other places such as Vishakhapatnam and Delhi etc.

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Beach near the Puri Jagannath Temple where usually shells are collected for crafts.



Conch shell and Scallop shell are mainly used in the crafts.



Artisans are involved in doing craft work.



Unique and different types and styles of shell crafts.

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Tools and Raw Materials

Following are the tools and raw materials used for Seashell Craft:

- **Seashells:** Natural seashells such as clamshells, cone shaped shells, small snail shells etc., are used to make seashell mirror.
- **Adhesive:** It is used to glue the seashells.
- **Plywood:** To give a support and provides a smooth surface to glue the shells.
- **Reflective Glass Sheet:** Cut and shaped glass sheet is used to make seashell mirror.
- **Handsaw:** To cut and shape the plywood according to the design.



Oil based colours are used to paint on shells.

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Scallops Shells.



Hard Moon Shells.



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Small Moon Shells.



Conch Shells.

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Coloured Scallop Shells.



Spiral Cone Shell.



Plywood board is used for mirror frame background.



Hot glue gun and glue stick is helps to stick seashells.

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Plastic god idol used in shell craft making.



Fevicol glue is used for stick the shells on plywood board.

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Plastic round shaped decorative products for craft design.



Artificial colourful flower used to decorate the shell craft products.



Colourful LED lights used to give more attractive to the crafts.



Small sized colourful plastic decorative products.

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Pencil is used to mark patterns and designs on plywood board.



Flat paint brush used to paint on shells.



Iron headed hammer and sharp tipped thick nail used to help in fixing the ring hanger to the frame.

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Hammer is use to hammering on chisel to cut the plywood.



Ring hanger and Slotted Mirror Plates are mainly used in mirror frames for hang on walls.



Hand saw is used to cut the plywood.

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Making Process

Seashells are the precious gift of God to human. There are more than thousand varieties of shells (that is sea-shells, land snails and fresh water shells etc..) with hundreds of colours, patterns and textures. These shell crafts are very adorable because of its rich look with elegant colour combination and natural design. Plywood sheet, reflective glass sheet and seashells are the basic raw materials, which plays a very important role in making sea-shell mirror. Initially the plywood sheet is cut using handsaw according to the required shape to make a frame for the mirror. Then the pre-cut and shaped glass sheet is glued at the centre of the plywood sheet.

The shells are purchased from the local market of Puri, which is brought from the coastal areas of Tamilnadu. Thick layer of Fevicol is applied on the flat surface of the plywood, which provides a smoother gluing surface for shells. The clamshells are glued by dipping the each single shell in the adhesive. Generally the clamshells are glued first by following the required design, which gives a shell background and makes easy to recognize the empty space. The coloured shells are added in between to cherish the design. Only few shells are coloured with brush according to the required design. Then the cone shaped small shells (turritellas) are arranged at the corner of the frame. The in-between gaps are filled with small snail shells by dipping them in to the Fevicol to complete the design. The eco-friendly wall hanging mirror made of seashell is finished. Apart from the seashell mirror artisan also good in making show pieces made of seashells.

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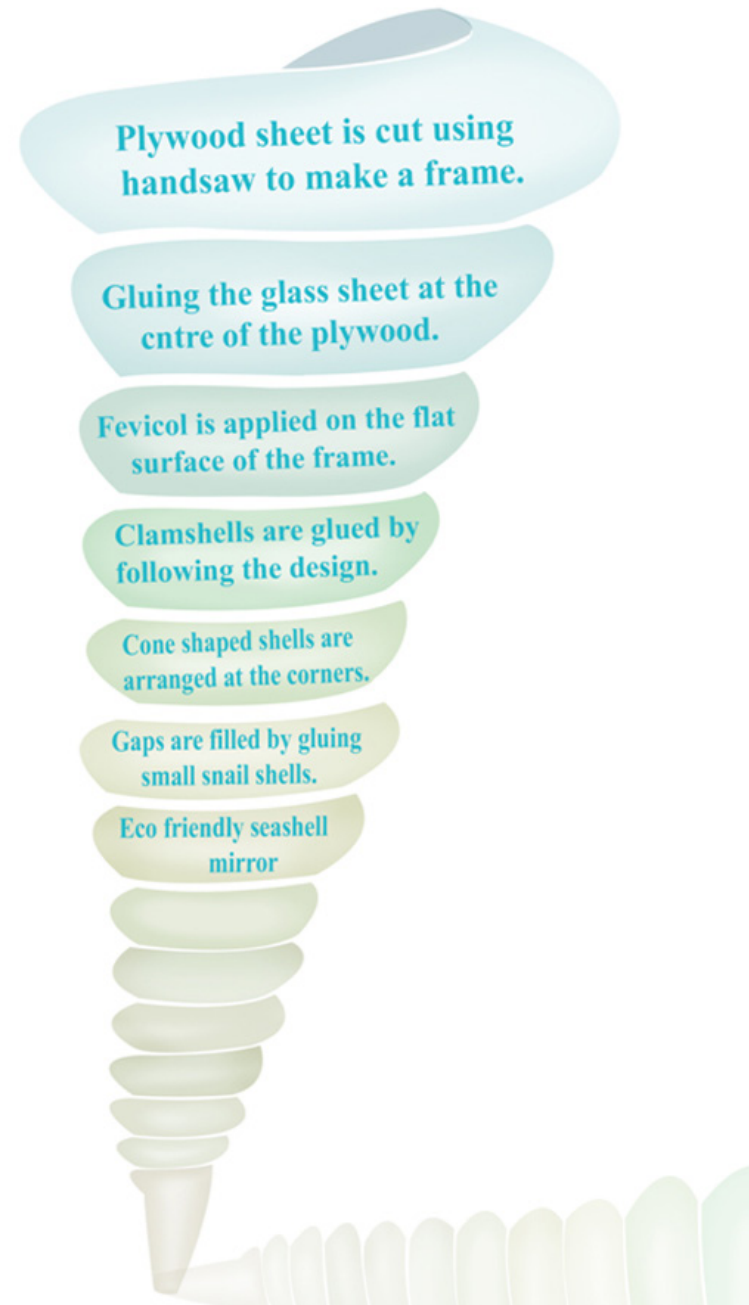
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Flow Chart



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Customised designs patterns are marked on plywood sheet with the help of pencil.



Plywood sheet is cut with the help of hand saw tool.



According to design pattern carefully removing the extra plywood with the help of flat chisel.

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Artisan fixing the Ring hanger on plywood sheet.



Applying glue on shell (conch shell) for paste on plywood.



Applying glue in small sections and press shells into glue.

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Continue to apply glue on shells and arranging various sized shells into glue.



Various size shells are placed around the mirror in a pattern.

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Applying hot glue on selected shell with a hot glue gun.



Pasting a plastic god idol on the glued shell.



Applying glue in small sections of shell and idol.



Glued shell is attached to the idol to look more attractive.

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Hot glue is applying on artificial flower.



To decorate the craft glued flower is attached to the bottom of the idol.



To give more attractive to the craft different types of decorative products are attached on shells.

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Artisan fixing LED light to the craft for look more attractive.



Using Scallops shells, decorative products and LED light, artisan made an attractive temple type shell craft.

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Products

Seashell craft is a very unique craft of making decorative items like seashell mirrors and chandeliers, showpieces, shell jewellery and figurines made from shells, mosaics and shell grottos etc., these shell craft is more adorable because of its individual colour combination and texture. Seashell crafts are versatile which is suitable for interior decorating, merging creativity with natural material. Seashell crafts sold to dealers in bulk with a price of INR65 to INR70 for big size mirrors.



Artisan created a lady carrying a basket craft by using different types of shells.

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Using Scallops shells and Spiral shells artisan made a Peacock craft.



Various size shells and coloured shells are placed around the mirror in a pattern.

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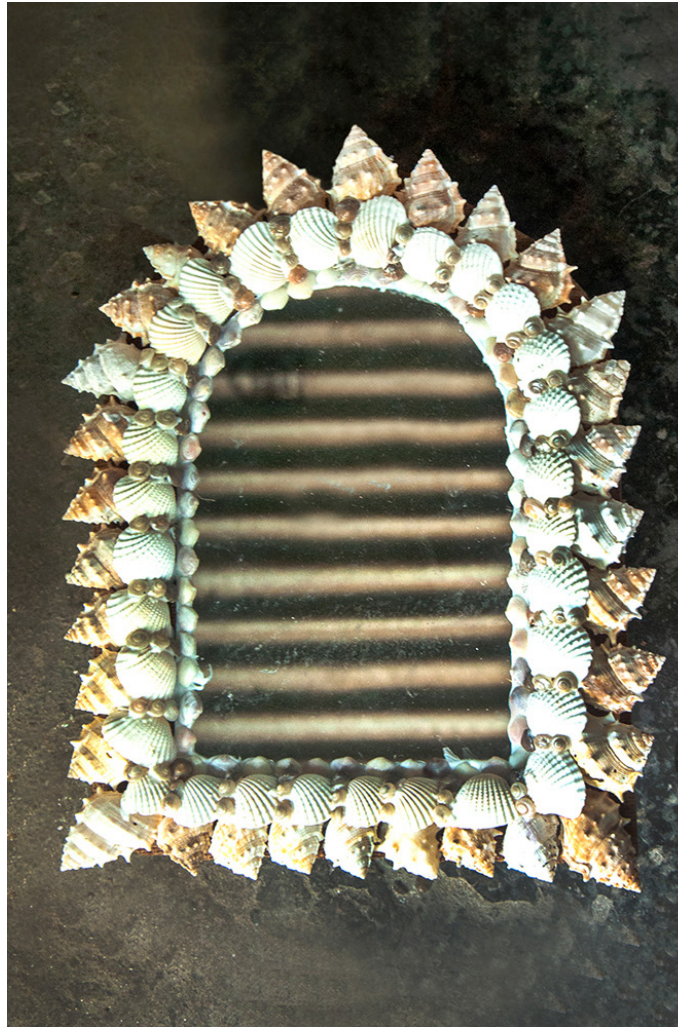
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Mirror frame is made out of different types of shells.



Using Scallops shells and decorative products artisan made an attractive temple type shell craft.

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Heart shaped mirror frame was made by using different shells.

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Video



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